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ABSTRACT

Concerns over career counseling continue to be heard on college campuses. Some of these concerns are articulated in this paper in an effort to promote more cost-effective services. The report opens with a discussion of student attrition and reviews the national literature, outlining such reasons for attrition as a lack of clear vocational goals. The changing nature of student needs is explored, as student bodies represent increasing diversity in age, background, etc.; thus requiring schools to be more attuned to varied students' learning styles and other characteristics. However, reviews of career and employment counseling services available to students indicate that shrinking budgets and increased numbers of students in need of college counseling are creating an important challenge. One way to meet this challenge, it is argued, is through Systematic Career Guidance (SCG). One important aspect of SCG, besides increased student contact and cost efficiency, is the opportunity for students to sit together in small groups as they share vocational interests. Through SCG, Career Services professionals help students become more clear about their career goals, the relevance of higher education to their goals, and how to stay on track. (Contains 27 references and 2 tables.) (RJM)

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CREATING A SYSTEMATIC MULTI-MODE APPROACH TO CAREER GUIDANCE

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Recently there has been a dialogue regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of career services delivery systems with much acknowledgement for the benefits of individual counseling, an obviously more costly approach compared with others (Rayman, 1996; Reardon, 1996; Spokane, 1991). Given the large numbers of students expecting and requiring career counseling, it is appropriate and responsible to examine what career services are provided and how these services are provided to customers. The challenge is to create approaches that meet the needs of customers, our institutions and even career services providers. Perhaps a multi-mode systematic approach which balances structured group and self-paced work while permitting individual counseling when needed can assist our already overburdened centers and staff (Super, Bowlsbey & Colozzi, 1985). A number of concerns have affected our campuses and students, some of which have been apparent for years and others just now receiving recognition. Articulating some of these and others may help bring into focus the vision to provide cost-effective services.

Attrition and Retention

A review of the national literature relating to college attrition reveals numerous studies aiming to determine reasons for attrition and variables associated with a lack of persistence in college. One study by Chase (1965) indicated that lack of clear vocational goals was among the three major reported reasons for leaving college. Another study by Willner (1980) designed to identify potential dropouts revealed that

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almost 90% of the incoming freshmen at a public community college cited, "to prepare for a career" as their major reason for going to college. These same students were found to have the largest percentages of persisters. Findings from this study also indicated that a large percentage of persisters were also found among those students who stated they had an occupational objective. These findings linking career orientation to intention to persist are in congruence with a study by Steel (1978) which revealed a causal relationship between student dissatisfaction with progress toward career goals and non-persistence. One of Willner's (1980) suggestions to maximize retention was a systematic course or group counseling program.

A national survey (Prediger, Roth and Noeth, 1974) revealed that three-fourths of those soon to enter college expect to receive career planning assistance. During this same time period T. H. Bell, Commissioner of Education, was raising major concerns about the work future of the one million young people between the ages of 15 and 19 who dropped out of high school in 1974 or out of society itself (Bell, 1975). Twenty years later, according to the findings of a new survey conducted by the Gallup Organization for the National Career Development Association (NCDA), (Hoyt & Lester 1995), 73% of young people between the ages of 18 and 25 feel high schools are not doing enough to place into jobs students who have dropped out or graduated, and 58% think high schools are not doing enough to help students choose careers. The survey indicated that 67% of those who used sources to obtain [career and job] information say the quality of the information needs improving, while 83% of all the youth surveyed believe they will need more formal training or education. Survey results clearly indicate the needs of today's youth for improved information and help in career planning.

Adult Learners

Meeting the career needs of adult learners is also important to theorists and practitioners. A special issue of the Career Development Quarterly devoted to work role transitions faced by adults (Savickas, 1995), noted the traditional concentration by counselors on the major transitions in educational-vocational roles as they seek to assist clients dealing with career choice, the school-to-work transition, and retirement. Less attention has been given to career transition occurring during a typical work life, possibly due to the focus of major career theories on

the career stages of exploration and establishment, rather than maintenance. The NCDA Gallup survey (Hoyt & Lester, 1995) indicated more than 72% of working adults in the U.S. say that they would try to get more information about their career options if they could start all over again, 53% believing they will need more education and training or formal training in order to maintain or increase their earning power. The survey also indicated that 44% identified a college setting as their probable source of training. The new one-stop career centers that many states are establishing are also designed to address the immediate and long-term planning needs of adults facing several job and career transitions. With so many young and older adults involved with "school-to-work" transition concerns, the need for cost-effective career counseling is very much evident. The application of a systematic career guidance approach in colleges, universities, and one-stop career centers can provide cost-effective services that support the career development needs of adults in transition.

Attracting and Meeting the Needs of Diverse Clientele

Sometimes getting students' attention with all that is going on in their lives is a major hurdle. Helping them recognize their need and become motivated to engage in needed career planning work is crucial. This is especially true with students who may be experiencing several life-roles such as working part time, parenting young children, experiencing the crisis and stress associated with job loss or relationship issues, providing care to elderly parents, or a combination of these and others. It is important to identify students with needs and aggressively solicit their participation, especially those who may be unlikely to seek assistance without external support and encouragement (Hess & Winston, 1995). Unfocused advertising of programs does not appear to attract those students having the most need. The challenge is to engage customers when they are ready to be engaged and yet continually develop ways to arouse those customers into a readiness stage. This means creating conditions in which people choose to be aroused and then become willing participants--*ready to self-engage*.

Researchers have examined stressors on campus environments for many years in an attempt to provide information that allows counselors and administrators to create less stressful campus environments. Generally these stressors are grouped under "academic" or "personal"

categories. In a study designed to measure how stressors change over time on a university campus (Murphy & Archer 1996), the general pattern of stressors from 1985 measured with 1993 data was quite similar with some differences. Stress related to concerns about career/future plans was reported more frequently for older students in 1993, a difference that was nonexistent in 1985. Increased competition for professional employment over the last several years was cited as the source of increasing stress related to career choice. While noting the complicated processes involved in making career choices and planning for the future, Murphy & Archer emphasized the important role of counselors and student affairs professionals in providing even more comprehensive services in this area in the future (1996).

Many of our campuses serve a culturally diverse, often at-risk customer base. In their review of literature, Loughead, Lia & Middleton (1995) noted no difference between Minorities and Whites in their career development interests or aspirations; however, Minorities do have lower expectations for achieving their occupational aspirations. The NCDA Gallup Survey (Hoyt & Lester, 1995) indicated that "in general, the career development needs of Black respondents appear to be greater than that of White respondents" (p. 68) with Blacks more likely than Whites to want more useful information about careers, to cite the need for assistance in selecting, changing, or obtaining a job in the last year, and to leave jobs because of employers' actions. A disturbing finding was that only one-third of all respondents reported visiting a professional counselor in a school or college setting regarding possible career choices. Intentional career development designed to modify the affective, cognitive, and behavioral processes which influence self-identity, decision-making, personal and work related values, and ultimately occupational choice, is important for all customers.

Being sensitive to students' learning styles and appropriate learning-study strategies is also important and can improve retention. In a recent study conducted at an open-admissions community college, results indicated high-risk students demonstrated auditory (through explanations and discussions), tactile concrete, and group learning preferences, and showed no demonstrable differences in learning styles between African American students and non-minority students (Grimes, 1995). Grimes noted the relative stability of learning styles (which are consequences of heredity and environment) and suggested that,

"...interventions focus on adaptations rather than learning styles changes" (Grimes, 1995, p. 426) to enhance student success, attitude, and retention. Students can adapt specific study techniques to match their preferred learning style, and counselors and faculty can also develop different counseling and teaching strategies to accommodate student styles. Because the challenges associated with increased diversity are evident at many community colleges and also at selective four-year colleges (Grimes, 1995), providing an environment that encourages matching students' styles with a mix of learning activities in a career services operation may be appropriate. Creating such an environment in the context of a systematic career guidance program can meet the career exploration needs of a diverse population.

The Challenge

A comprehensive examination of the career and employment counseling services available to Canadian youth and adults (Conger et al., 1994) revealed a discrepancy between the numbers in need of college counseling and the shrinking funds available for such services. Surprisingly, only 14% of clients were seen in groups, prompting the recommendation to discover and promote additional strategies to serve clients, such as more emphasis on group counseling and self-service in terms of career and labor market information. Another main issue noted was the absence of perceived leadership in career and employment counseling with only slightly over 40% of counselors believing that their work is understood by their superiors or people who fund their programs. Of particular concern was the general absence of effective and appropriate systems for the evaluation of career counseling services. An examination of funding trends for staff and resources indicated budgets for materials decreased in the "past two years" for over 40% of the respondents, and budgets for staff decreased 23% during the same time period. Concerning the "next two years", almost 40% of respondents indicated budgets for staff were expected to decrease. Observations of similar constraints and limitations in U.S. colleges today are perhaps only too familiar and yet have an historical flavor. As noted 40 years ago, "...with the handicap of a limited philosophy, a limited staff, or limited resources, vocational development needs are not met" (Super, 1957, p. 315).

At the very minimum, some career counseling assistance is probably needed by 60% of currently enrolled undergraduate students at colleges and universities (Hoyt & Lester, 1995). Most practitioners realize it is not uncommon for half of all students coming to a career center for service to be other than first year entering freshmen. The realities of student demand from an increasingly diverse student body and budget restrictions create the challenge to assess current programs and deliver more cost-effective services. It does not necessarily mean doing less with less but doing things differently and cost-effectively. There is evidence of creating alternative deliveries of career guidance, including structured group guidance, use of para-professionals, self-paced materials, computer technology, and career modules infused into classroom settings--perhaps all blended together in a "Super career processor" (Bowlsbey, 1979; Colozzi, 1981; Colozzi & Haehnlen, 1982; Super et al., 1985). At some point, depending on budget restrictions, it may mean doing less with less. The negative effect on students can raise attrition rates, lower FTE's (and the overall college budget), and eventually have a ripple effect throughout the entire institution.

"Higher education is in the midst of a major transformation. Shifting demographics, changing economic agendas, eroding public confidence, demands for accountability, and increasingly diverse student populations are changing the character of most institutions" (Schroeder, 1996, p. 115). It is time to assess and create new ways of thinking while thinking about new ways of creating.

Systematic Career Guidance (SCG) - Another Approach

A traditional individual-based career counseling approach is very costly to the institution and less able to meet the demands of the large numbers of students who require such services. The actual base cost to deliver career services in a primarily individual-based approach is approximately $44 per student per contact hour, the national median annual earnings of counselors plus benefits and preparation time (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 1996-97, p.147). If one counselor sees a client for five or six hour long sessions, it costs the institution approximately $240 (including preparation time) to service that student. That same counselor in a systematic approach can service up to 16 students (two groups of 8) for approximately $265 (see Figures 1 and 2) . The additional $25 represents the cost of support staff (career

assistants) and computerized guidance components (excluding set-up costs). This translates into a 1600% increase in the institution's ability to cost effectively meet the career development needs of some students and begin to provide service to the large number of students who have some degree of undecidedness regarding their occupational choice and who, with a traditional primarily individual-based approach, might not otherwise be adequately serviced. Put another way, utilizing counseling staff in a systematic approach reduces the $44 cost per hour to $5.50 and potentially increases the number of students effectively serviced 16 fold.

One important aspect of the systematic approach is the "created" opportunity for students to sit together in small groups, discussing various topics including their self-knowledge, sharing and listening to each other as they experience the journey together (see Figure 1, steps 1, 3, and 7). This peer contact can be further reinforced when they re-visit the career center for self-paced browsing or access a computer-guidance system (see Figure 1, steps 4 and 5). Because the paraprofessionals are also student peers, further peer group contact is experienced. This peer contact is believed to be "the strongest single source of influence on cognitive and affective [student] development of students (Astin, 1996, p. 126). Assessment occurs throughout the process, and the use of self-paced resources, inventories, tests, computer guidance systems, and various multimedia technology helps customers develop and accept an integrated picture of themselves and their life roles, and test this information against reality. The use of Holland's RIASEC Types (Holland, 1973) in the context of Prediger's World of Work Map provides an easy to understand visual orientation linking career assessment to occupational options (Prediger & Swaney, 1995). Determining the effectiveness of a systematic intervention could be accomplished using an appropriate outcome assessment process (Terenzini & Upcraft, 1996).

It is unfair and irresponsible to assume that the professional and support staff at many counseling and career services centers can effectively meet the career counseling needs of large numbers of customers primarily through a traditional individual-based counseling approach. Systematic career guidance may provide a cost-effective alternative. A few of the building blocks necessary to implement such an approach may already be in place at many institutions, such as the use of group guidance, computerized guidance systems, and the introduction of self-paced materials. The approach is ineffective if there are no

adequately trained peer paraprofessionals or career assistants to service customers during the seven step process when a professional counselor's expertise is not necessary. Considering the important role of 21st century computer guidance technology, it may be equally important to teach professional and paraprofessional staff how to use it cost-effectively and efficiently.

Career services staff need the full support of administration and faculty, including adequate budget allocations to successfully implement an systematic approach. This will require a common understanding and agreement regarding the importance and contribution of career services to student learning and the academic enterprise. Nothing less than this will sufficiently justify support for a career services program during difficult fiscal periods. The negative effect of several thousand students floundering about with unclear career goals can impact the entire college community in ways which can dwarf any burnout already being experienced by career services staff. Students lacking career goals will be less motivated in classroom environments, and faculty may notice such students dropping classes, resulting in higher attrition rates, eventually jeopardizing state funding for public institutions (Chase, 1965; Steel, 1978; Willner, 1980). It would clearly be off-course for any college that services a minority population, young and older adults in transition, at-risk students, and special needs populations, to neglect their career development needs. When students drop out of college, they lose the opportunity to develop their potential to be productive and fulfilled workers and citizens in their community and are more likely to experience unemployment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The loss to the greater regional community is geometrically aggravated in ways that, over time, negatively affect society. Those who do secure employment often end up "floundering in the secondary labor market in positions that contribute only marginally to either worker satisfaction or societal benefits" (Hoyt & Lester, 1995, p. 92). It is essential for our colleges to educate and prepare people who will contribute to and actively participate, as job ready graduates, in a high skilled work force - people who can be self directed and self managed. Some of these people will also seek further education and training depending on their career goals. The role of cost-effective career counseling is to facilitate students' progress throughout the college.

Colleges need to assess their priorities and resources and determine the best course of action regarding the full implementation of a systematic approach to career guidance. Career Services professionals do not pretend to know the many needs and program requests that eventually filter through the desks of deans and finally to the president who has to make some obviously difficult decisions. But they do know how to help people become more clear about their career goals, the relevance of higher education to their goals and how to stay on track. They also *need* to know how to help their institution cost-effectively meet the career guidance needs of its customers. This may involve motivating, training and empowering staff dealing with burnout and low morale to shift perceptions, take on new roles and better focus on providing the best possible career guidance services for students who need help. One measure of our success will be the extent to which we have created a climate in which students choose to become active, eager participants in the discovery of their own career development process -- *an active search for self.*

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Figure Captions

Figure 1. Systematic career guidance (SCG).

Figure 2. Cost analysis of systematic career guidance (SCG).

Figure 1. Systematic career guidance (SCG).

SYSTEMATIC CAREER GUIDANCE (SCG)
(A Seven Step Process)

START AT STEP 1.

STEP 7: FINAL REVIEW and PLANNING with PROFESSIONAL Share your career planning summary sheet with your counselor. Now that you are more decided about a career, you can start planning your next steps, including courses for next semester.		***STEP 1: INTAKE SESSION with PROFESSIONAL*** Meet with your counselor to discuss your interests, experiences and goals. Receive introduction to our career exploration and planning process.
STEP 6: SELF REVIEW and SUMMARY Use our career planning summary sheet to record the information you've discovered about yourself and the world of work. Bring this to *STEP 7*, then save it for future reference.		***STEP 2: SELF PACED CAREER EXPLORATION*** Learn about the career development process. Try out some easy exercises that will help you understand your personality type and where you fit in the world of work.
STEP 5: DETAILED EXPLORATION with SUPPORT STAFF Use our career center resources to discover more detailed information about your favorite occupations including salary, educational training requirements, and job outlook.	***STEP 4: BROWSING with SUPPORT STAFF*** Browse through our summaries of occupations that match your personality type, and select your favorite choices.	***STEP 3: REVIEW with PROFESSIONAL*** Meet again with professional staff to review how your personality type matches certain occupations in the world of work.

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Figure 2. Cost analysis of systematic career guidance (SCG).

COST ANALYSIS OF SYSTEMATIC CAREER GUIDANCE (SCG)*

STEP 7: FINAL REVIEW and PLANNING with PROFESSIONAL

P (1HR Group/1 HR Prep) - CL (1 HR)
Professional and Client meet for summary session
COST = $5.50 ABC/hr *(group of 8)*

STEP 6: SELF REVIEW and SUMMARY

CL (3-4 HR)
Client does homework and integrates occupational /educational information into self-paced materials.
COST = $0 ABC/hr (self-paced)

STEP 5: DETAILED EXPLORATION with SUPPORT STAFF

S (10 MIN) - T (1 HR) - CL (2-3 HR)
Client obtains DETAILED occupational/educational information
COST = (S) $1.50 + (T) $.75 ABC/hr

**** ABC/hr = Actual Base Cost per contact hour***

to compute the ABC/hr cost, divide the hourly rate (including fringe benefits) plus appropriate preparation time, by the average number of clients serviced per hour.

STEP 4: BROWSING with SUPPORT STAFF

S (12 Min) - CL (1-2 HR)
Client browses self-paced occupational information
COST = $1.50 ABC/hr **(4-5 clients)**

STEP 1: INTAKE SESSION with PROFESSIONAL

P (1 HR Group/1 HR Prep) - CL (1HR)
Intake Interview -
Initiation of self-assessment process and setting of career/life counseling goals
COST = $5.50 ABC/hr (group of 8)

STEP 2: SELF PACED CAREER EXPLORATION

CL (3-4 HR)
Self-paced career exploration materials
COST = $0 ABC/hr (self-paced)

STEP 3: REVIEW with PROFESSIONAL

P (1HR Group/1 HR Prep) - CL (1 HR)
Review and discussion of self-paced materials
COST = $5.50 ABC/hr (group of 8)

KEY: P = Professional **($22.00 hourly cost includes fringe benefits)**
S = Support Staff **($ 7.00 hourly cost for paraprofessionals)**
T = Technology **($ 1.50 hourly cost after first year)**
CL = Client

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